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Marcus Bär/Andreas Bonnet
Helene Decke-Cornill/Andreas Grünewald
Adelheid Hu
(Hrsg.)

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Commodification of Russian in post-1991 Europe

ANETA PAVLENKO

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine a new sociolinguistic phenomenon - commodification of Russian in contemporary Europe. I will show that after the dissolution of the USSR, Russian underwent a significant retrenchment, followed by stabilization and expansion to spaces where it was not present prior to 1991. A closer look at this reemergence and at the actual spaces where Russian is learned, maintained, and used as a second or foreign language by non-Russians provides important insights into the interplay between economic factors and circulation of linguistic resources in the global marketplace. An enhanced understanding of the process of language valorization can, in turn, inform the field of foreign language education where at present we see the dissociation between linguistic demands of the fluctuating economy and linguistic supply of traditionally inflexible foreign language curricula.

I will begin by outlining a theoretical framework for understanding language commodification in globalized economy. Then, I will provide a brief overview of retrenchment and reemergence of Russian after the dissolution of the USSR. Next, I will discuss three spaces where commodification of Russian is currently taking place. Using a concentric circles approach, I will begin with the labor market in Russia, then expand to the informational and media space of post-Soviet countries and then to tourism and service industry in Europe. I will end by sketching briefly the implications of commodification of Russian for the field of foreign language education.

2. Commodification of language in the new economy: Theoretical framework

Recent decades have been characterized by fundamental changes in the economic order. The 'old' economy, characterized by strong government participation and predominantly local and national production and organization, was based on agriculture and on extraction and transformation of primary resources (Castells 2000). In this economy, the road toward economic advancement and upward mobility for minority speakers involved assimilation to or at least appropriation of the majority language (Piller & Pavlenko 2007).

To understand language valorization in the traditional economic order, Bourdieu (1991) developed a comprehensive theoretical account of ways in which particular languages, language varieties, and ways of speaking are

legitimized by state institutions - in particular education - and transformed into forms of symbolic capital in the linguistic marketplace. In this view, the labor market determined the value of dominant languages and schools provided access to - and legitimized - these linguistic resources. Critics of this account pointed out that the claims about the unified nature of educational, labor, and linguistic markets may be overstated (e.g., Martin-Jones 2007). In post-Soviet Ukraine, for instance, we see a dissociation between political legitimization of Ukrainian in schools and economic valorization of Russian in the labor market and media (Pavlenko 2008a). Even more importantly, Bourdieu's (1991) account, focused on linguistic markets of individual nation-states, did not apply straightforwardly to the new economic order which emerged in the past decades.

Globalization, urbanization, the slowdown and outsourcing of primary manufacturing, and development of new communication technologies led to the emergence of the 'new' economy which is service- and information-based and organized on a global scale (Castells 2000). The 'new' economy, in turn, resulted in new language needs (e.g., multilingual language workers), new language practices (e.g., telecommunication), new discourses which treat language and culture primarily in economic terms, and new conditions for language valorization (Heller 2010; Heller & Duchêne 2012). Multilingualism plays the key role in the new economy, allowing for management of information and communication across space, time, and linguistic differences (Duchêne 2009; Duchêne & Heller 2012). The economic advancement, under these conditions, may require appropriation of additional languages and communicative skills. At the same time, the relationship between multilingualism and economic opportunities is not straightforward: the multilingual workforce is heavily feminized, and many language workers work in casual, part-time, relatively poorly paid jobs with little job security (Piller & Pavlenko 2007). In some contexts, the employers may even manage without - or with reduced numbers of - language workers, exploiting instead the skills of bi- and multilingual employees (e.g., nurses, airport baggage workers) (Heller & Duchêne 2012; Martinez 2008).

Furthermore, multilingualism is not a uniform phenomenon, because languages are not equal in terms of political, economic and cultural relevance. The analytical framework put forth by de Swaan (2001) attempts to capture these differences by distinguishing between English as the *hypercentral* language of international business and communication, *supercentral* languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Malay, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swahili) which function as languages of one or more nation-states and *lingua francas* of interethnic communication, *central* languages which fulfill all of the functions of supercentral languages without functioning as *lingua francas*, and *peripheral* languages, which are primarily oral languages with familial and local functions. This framework

reflects the inequality inherent in the world language order but fails to address its dynamic and fluctuating nature and the consequences of saturation with English. For instance, in a study of 548 websites of ten global brands, Kelly-Holmes (2006) found that websites in supercentral (225) and central languages (176) outnumbered those in English (147). These findings suggested that while English may be a prerequisite for entering the new global market, it is not always - or perhaps no longer - the *de rigueur* language of commercial internet.

Duchêne and Heller (2012) similarly argue that the phenomena observed today are infinitely more complex than simply proliferation of English and linguistic imperialism. Treating Bourdieu's (1991) concept of a linguistic market as an invitation to question the dominant value system, Heller and Duchêne (2012; see also Duchêne 2009; Heller 2010; Duchêne & Heller 2012) discuss the shift from modernity to late modernity in terms of five interconnected processes: market saturation, market expansion, distinction (added value), tertiarization, (the development of the service sector), and flexibilization (the ability to shift sites and modes of work). They show that, in the context of the new economy, these processes lead to the shift from the discourses of 'pride' which tie languages to identities, territories, and nation-states to the discourses of 'profit' which frame languages in economic terms as commodities useful for production of resources and for entering the global market (Heller & Duchêne 2012).

The goal of the present paper is to contribute to the understanding of language valorization in the new economy by examining Russia's rise as a global investor and its impact on the role of Russian in post-Soviet countries and in Europe. The data for this discussion come from two ongoing projects: The first examines the role of Russian in post-Soviet media, linguistic landscapes, and linguistic repertoires of the younger generation, with particular focus on Ukraine (Pavlenko 2008a,b, 2009, 2012; Pavlenko & Melnyk in progress). The second project examines the role of Russian in linguistic landscapes of European countries, with particular focus on Cyprus and Montenegro (Eracleous & Pavlenko 2012).

3. Retrenchment and reemergence of Russian after the dissolution of the USSR

Russian offers an interesting case study of the language valorization process because in the 1990s the prognosis for its uses outside of Russia proper was rather grim. In the USSR, Russian functioned as a supra-ethnic language, alongside the languages of the titular republics. After the dissolution of the USSR in December of 1991, the fourteen successor states set out to build legitimate nation-states and to distance themselves from the Soviet past (Pavlenko 2008a,b). These goals were reflected in their language planning

objectives: to transition from titular-Russian bilingualism to a titular-medium public space, to derussify the titular language corpus, and to replace Russian as a *lingua franca* with English. To accomplish these goals, the new states downgraded the status of Russian to that of the language of interethnic communication, minority language, or a foreign language, and began removing it from official paperwork, official communication, state-sponsored media, and public signage.

Armenia, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan closed Russian-medium schools and eliminated Russian as a second language from the titular school curricula. Baltic countries and Ukraine, which housed large Russian-speaking populations, reduced the numbers of Russian-medium schools and made Russian an optional foreign language in the titular curricula. The teaching of Russian also ceased in the countries of the former socialist block, such as Hungary, Poland, and East Germany where it was replaced by English. The process of derussification was further reinforced by the out-migration of Russian speakers, especially visible in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus, and the withdrawal of Soviet/Russian troops. The derussification measures and processes had significantly reduced the spheres of Russian use and the number of Russian speakers: between 1990 and 2000, the number of people fluent in Russian had shrunk from 350 to 320 million, with half of the losses coming from post-Soviet states (Tishkov 2008).

In the last decade, however, the pendulum swung again, this time in favor of Russian. The change began in the countries that stopped or slowed down the derussification process. In 1995, Belarus, where Russian functions as the *de facto* main language, has upgraded its status to that of the second state language. Kazakhstan (1995) and Kyrgyzstan (2000) upgraded Russian to the second official language. The goal of language education in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is now trilingual competence in the titular language, Russian, and English. Ukraine, where the heated debates about adopting Russian as a second official language are still going on, has meanwhile settled on functional territorial bilingualism, with the West using Ukrainian, the East favoring Russian and Central Ukrainians using both.

Reversals of initial derussification policies have also taken place in Armenia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan which reinstated Russian as an obligatory second language in titular-medium schools. In the Baltic countries and Georgia, Russian is offered as an optional foreign language, and in Lithuania it has emerged as the most popular second foreign language (Pavlenko 2008a; Russian World conference 2008). Recent Western and Russian surveys have also documented a change in attitudes, with respondents in Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Tajikistan stating that Russian should be offered more widely in their countries (Gradirovsky & Espova 2008; Iatsenko et al. 2008). Moreover, Russian has also become visible in linguistic landscapes of European countries such as Italy (Shohamy et al. 2010). To

date, this revalorization of Russian has been examined largely from a political and demographic point of view and with the focus on post-Soviet countries (Iatsenko et al. 2008; Pavlenko 2008a,b). In what follows, I will expand the discussion to Europe and examine how these developments have been affected by Russia's transition to the new economy.

4. Russian in the transnational economic market

The post-1991 institutional collapse, disruption of traditional production links, and transition from central planning and state ownership to market economy and private property destabilized the economies of successor states, leading to transformation depression, i.e. a major decline in output, living standards, and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in all successor states, including Russia. The 1990s also witnessed the decline of economic cooperation in the region: the share of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Russia's foreign trade dropped from 66% in 1991 to 18% in 2000 (Korobkov 2007; Myant & Drahokoupil 2011).

The Russian financial crisis of 1998 created new conditions for economic recovery. In 1999, Russia's new president Putin began the efforts to reconsolidate the state, recentralize political control and administration, and reorder fiscal relations. These reforms, in conjunction with the rising world oil prices, facilitated Russia's economic turnaround which, in turn, led to the improvement in the living standards, rapid rise in the GDP, and proliferation and cross-border expansion of private- and state-owned transnational corporations (TNCs) (i.e. corporations with affiliates abroad), such as Lukoil or Gazprom. In the 2000s, Russia became the fastest growing global investor: its outward foreign direct investment (FDI) stock increased from \$ 20.1 billion in 1999 to \$ 318.7 billion in 2009, making it the world's 15th most important economy (Kuznetsov 2010, 2011; Myant & Drahokoupil 2011). The global economic crisis of 2007-2008 - with oil prices falling from nearly \$ 100 in 2008 to \$ 62 in 2009 - adversely affected Russia's economy and its foreign operations, yet the anti-crisis measures undertaken by the Russian government contained the key crisis manifestations, allowing for continuous expansion of Russian TNCs, including extension of control over financial infrastructures of Ukraine and Kazakhstan (Filippov 2011).

Heller (2010) argues that the reconstitution of colonial power relations in economic terms is characteristic of late capitalism - it allows former colonial powers to legitimize continued influence and to reframe the imperial markets as collaborative rather than hierarchical, and as aimed at economic development and competition rather than as serving the interests of the imperial center. Russia's spectacular comeback allowed it to reestablish its influence on parts of the former federation, which it has reconstituted first as the CIS and, more recently, as the Eurasian Economic Community and a Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, with the aim of creating a

Common Economic Space. In 2008, the leading destinations for Russian FDI in the CIS were Belarus (58%), Ukraine (23.4%), Kazakhstan (7.4%), Armenia (4.3%), and Kyrgyzstan (3.8%) (Kuznetsov 2010, 2011; Panibratov & Kalotay 2009).

The neo-colonial relations, in turn, allow for the recasting of former imperial languages as a neutral means of access to the global marketplace (Heller 2010). This reframing is also taking place - both intentionally and spontaneously - in the post-Soviet space. In the 2000s, the Russian government funded several programs, such as the Russian World Fund aimed at supporting Russian language in the Near and Far Abroad. These efforts intensified in 2007, proclaimed the "Year of the Russian Language". The key goal of these initiatives is to shift the public discourse on Russian from an ideological approach (the language of the Soviet past) to the pragmatic one (the language of the globalized present and future which enables efficient interaction with geopolitical partners) (Iatsenko et al. 2008: 10; Russian World Conference 2008: 16).

Yet the reframing of Russian is not just an ideological enterprise - the new economy has created favorable conditions for revalorization of Russian as the language of transnational post-Soviet business networks. To give but one example, a few years after the dissolution of the USSR, Laitin (1998) predicted that economic factors would force Russian speakers in Latvia and Estonia to shift to titular languages. This prediction could have worked in traditional economies operated by nation-states, but it did not work in the context governed by transnational market forces. In Latvia, for instance, Russian-speakers, locked out of the state sector due to the lack of Latvian citizenship and/or Latvian proficiency, took advantage of their ties to Russia to create a thriving private sector where the knowledge of Latvian is unnecessary and where Latvians seeking employment have to know Russian (Commercio 2004).

Labor shortages in the Russian Federation also made Russian an important resource for the blue-collar labor market (Korobkov 2007). According to Shcherbakova (2010), in 2008, Russia employed 2,425,900 legal labor migrants from 151 countries, including 1,780,000 (74%) from other post-Soviet countries, in particular Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Russian also facilitated labor migration to Kazakhstan, which employed 542,000 legal migrants, Ukraine (27,000), and Belarus (2,500). Starting in 2006, Russia also began attracting increasing numbers of labor migrants from other countries, in particular China, North Korea, Turkey, and Vietnam (Shcherbakova 2010). The new economic opportunities raised the value of Russian skills among prospective labor migrants: Turkish construction workers, for instance, can use their Russian skills not only in Russia but also in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine (Içduyugu & Karaçay 2012). Turkish workers, however, also have access to alternative labor

markets. In contrast, low-income post-Soviet states are at present dependent on remittances from Russia: according to the World Bank, in 2006, remittances constituted 36.7% of the GDP in Tajikistan, 35.2% in Moldova, 18.4% in Armenia, and 17.1% in Kyrgyzstan, as compared with 2.4-3.3% in the Baltic countries (Myant & Drahokoupil, 2011). In view of this economic dependence, it is not surprising that survey respondents in these countries view expansion of Russian-language offerings in a positive light (Gradirovsky & Esipova 2008; Iatsenko et al. 2008).

5. Russian in transnational media

Yet work needs and transnational cash and labor flows only partially shape our linguistic repertoires - it also matters what we do during leisure time and the guilty pleasures of many citizens of post-Soviet countries come from Russian TV. Today, Russian TV channels are watched by 50 million viewers in the CIS and Baltic countries (MacFadyen 2008). In Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Ukraine, between 84 and 100% of the respondents watch Russian channels regularly or periodically, in Latvia and Kyrgyzstan 76-78% and in Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, and Lithuania 41 to 50% (Iatsenko et al. 2008). In the 1990s, several countries blocked Russian TV channels, yet these attempts were counteracted by satellite receivers (McCormack 1999; Uffelmann 2011). What accounts for this popularity of Russian TV in nationalizing successor states and what are its implications for Russian?

The story of the resurgence of Russian TV and cinema is embedded in the context of the Russian economic recovery. The dissolution of the USSR, the collapse of the central distribution system, and derussification activities of the successor states disrupted the Russian-medium cultural space that previously united the fifteen republics. In Russia, plagued by financial woes, film production shrank from 300 films in 1990 to an all-time low of 28 in 1996, and TV channels were flooded with low-priced Brazilian and Mexican dramas. After the 1998 crisis, most Russian TV channels were no longer willing to pay \$ 12,000-15,000 per episode and decided to invest in domestic production. By 1999, all major channels included new Russian series in their prime time programs. By 2002, their proportion rose to 70% of top-rated series, nearly eliminating foreign competition. In 2005, Russian TV showed 538 domestic series, ranging from soaps and crime fiction to adaptations of classical Russian and Soviet literature and reinterpretations of Russian and Soviet history (MacFadyen 2008; Latysheva 2009).

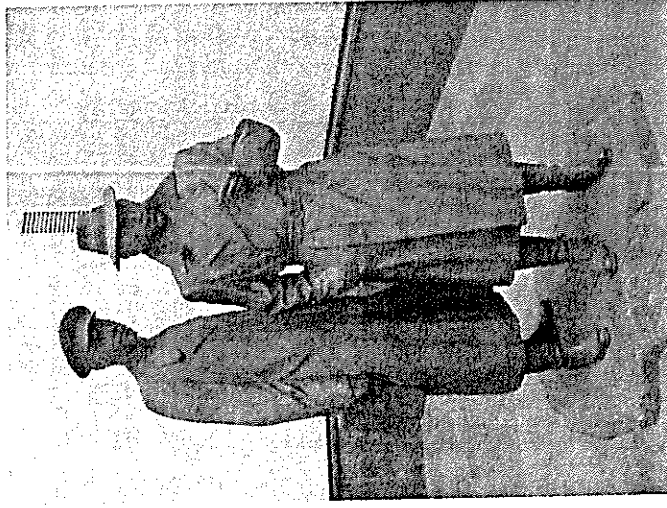
The key factor in this turnaround was Putin's media policy, which reestablished government subsidies and effectively re-nationalized Russian media. Today, up to 85% of the Russian media receive some type of state subsidies, sometimes in the form of grants from state banks and government-controlled TV channels (Lupis 2007). The Ministry of Culture finances about

30 films a year, with the focus on 'patriotic', historic and children's films, while the Defense Ministry and the FSB (Federal Security Service) fund films about heroic intelligence agents and counterterrorism operatives (Latysheva 2009). This funding allows the state to control some of the content, yet it also allows Russian TV producers and film-makers to hire the best talent and to compete successfully against American and Latin American productions as well as against local programming in other post-Soviet countries, where the funding for TV channels, not to mention film-making, is significantly more limited (McCormack 1999).

The second advantage of Russian TV channels lies in the fact that after 1991 Moscow maintained the copyrights and the ownership of Soviet films and TV series. The cult Soviet classics, such as *17 mgnovenii vesny* [17 moments of spring] (1973), a mini-series about a Soviet spy in Nazi Germany, and *Mesto vstrechi izmenit' net'zia* [The meeting place cannot be changed] (1979), a mini-series about criminal investigations in post-World War II Moscow, continue to be popular with both older and younger generations of post-Soviet viewers, as seen in their high visibility in social media websites, such as Facebook and Youtube. The continuous hold of Soviet media on the post-Soviet consciousness can also be illustrated by the fact that in 2009, to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the creation of the Ukrainian criminal investigations division, the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kyiv installed a monument portraying the two popular characters from *The meeting place cannot be changed* (Picture 1). Two decades after the independence, in Ukraine, these Russian-speaking characters are still perceived as ours.

The ability to create the perception of a shared community is the third and perhaps the most important advantage of Russian TV and it is achieved through a variety of means, from the wide coverage of events in the post-Soviet space to inclusion of local characters and settings. Most importantly, it is achieved through participation of titular actors. The distinguishing feature of the Soviet cultural space was its multi-ethnicity. Soviet films and TV series featured numerous non-Russian movie stars - Armenians Armen Dzigharhanian and Frunzik Mkrtchian, Georgians Sofiko Chiaureli and Vakhtang Kikabidze, Latvians Via Artmane and Ivars Kalniņš, Lithuanians Donatas Banionis and Juozas Budraitis, and Uzbeks Talgat Nigmatullin and Rustam Sagdullayev - whose authenticity was conveyed through their accented L2 Russian. After the collapse of the USSR, many of these stars found themselves out of work, as did many actors in Russia itself. Following Russia's economic recovery, film-makers began new transnational collaborations in the process of the *reconstitution of the Russian-medium transnational cultural space*. Such collaborations are well-exemplified by the TV series *Drongo* (2002): based on the books written in Russian by an Azerbaijani writer, Chingiz Abdullayev, these adventures of a post-Soviet

James Bond are filmed on location in Russia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, starring a popular Soviet heartthrob Ivars Kalniņš (Latvia), as well as Rustam Sagdullayev (Uzbekistan), Zurab Kipshidze and Kahi Kavsadze (Georgia), and Olesya Sudzilovskaya (Ukraine).



Picture 1: Sculpture "A meeting place cannot be changed", installed April 15, 2009, next to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and dedicated to "Zheglouys and Sharapovs" [names of the protagonists of the TV series] of Ukrainian criminal investigations. (author's picture, Kyiv, Ukraine, May 2012)

The opportunity to take part in well-funded TV and film projects, to perform in front of wider audiences, or to directly reach a wider readership makes Russian a valuable commodity in the cultural domain. Today, the majority of Belarusian writers write in Russian, as do some Ukrainian writers, such as best-selling Andrei Kurkov, and also some Azeri writers, such as Chingiz Abdullayev, or a young sci-fi writer, Lala Hasanova. Russian also maintains a position in the titular media - in Ukraine, for instance, the majority of the print media appear in Russian (Besters-Dilger 2009), while Kazakh film studios continue to make films in Russian (www.kazakhfilmstudios.kz). Russian is also used by some popular singers, such as Sophia Rotaru who sings in Moldovan/Romanian, Ukrainian, and Russian, or Laima Vaikule who sings in Latvian and Russian. The continuous existence of the transnational Russian-medium cultural space and the ties between post-Soviet artistic

elites are usually ignored in the literature on post-Soviet multilingualism: in the case of Latvia, for instance, the hostility of political elites towards Russian has received wide coverage but it is significantly less-known that prominent Latvian performers, such as actor Ivars Kalniņš, singer Laima Vaikule, or Latvia's most popular composer and former Minister of Culture Raimonds Pauls, continue to make use of their L2 Russian and remain frequent guests in Moscow and an intrinsic feature of Russian cultural life.

For the audiences outside of Russia, the participation of titular elites in Russian-medium productions legitimizes the use of Russian and transforms the world portrayed from *theirs* into *ours*. Yet the state funding has implications for the content of the films and series. Some make subtle or sometimes blatant attempts to reintroduce Russian cultural imperialism and reposition Russian as an inherently superior language. For instance, a recent TV series, *Belaia Gvardia* [The White Guard] (2012), based on Bulgakov's novel about civil war events in Kiev in 1918, makes fun of Ukrainian attempts at independence and portrays opportunistic characters who shift between Ukrainian and Russian with the changes in political climate. This denigration of Ukrainian, interestingly enough, comes from the pen of two Ukrainian scriptwriters from Kharkiv, Sergey and Maryna Dyachenko. Another recent Russian film, *Taras Bul'ba* (2009), delves into more distant history to suggest that Russians and Ukrainians are one people and to portray Ukrainian Cossacks as Russian speakers loyal to Russia. Based on the novel of the Russian-language Ukrainian writer Gogol, this movie was made by a (former) Ukrainian director, Vladimir Bortko, and starred the who is who of Ukrainian film elite, including Bohdan Stupka, Ostap Stupka, Ada Rogovtseva and Les Serdiuk. These examples show that, while Ukrainian political elites voice concerns about the low status of Ukrainian and continuous use of Russian in the information space, Ukrainian artistic elites participate in the reconstitution of the very same Russian-medium transnational cultural space that promotes the use of Russian.

One could argue that attachment to Russian TV is characteristic of the older generation, while the younger generation is turning to electronic media in a shift that may change the current language balance. To test this hypothesis I have examined literacy practices of young ethnic Ukrainians, graduates of Ukrainian-medium schools and English majors in a Ukrainian-medium university. The findings revealed that Russian is the preferred language (48 - 58 %) for the use of TV, print media, and the internet (Pavlenko & Melnyk in progress). Similar findings come from Kazakhstan, where users favor Runet (Russian internet) over Kaznet sites (Uffelmann 2011). In both countries, users cite larger numbers, superior quality, and higher speed of Russian-language sites which offer access to a wider array of resources, from social sites to music and video downloads. Furthermore, both countries also host many Russian-medium as well as bi- and trilingual sites. More importantly,

both host affiliates of Russian telecom companies. The leading Russian company, MTS (controlled by Sistema JSC) first entered Belarus (2002) and Ukraine (2003) and then expanded to Uzbekistan (2004), Turkmenistan (2005), and Armenia (2007), while its principal competitor, VimpelCom, first acquired a subsidiary in Kazakhstan (2004) and then entered the markets in Ukraine and Tajikistan (2005), and Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Armenia (2005) (Kuznetsov 2011). These acquisition and investment patterns suggest that access to Runet in the post-Soviet space will continue to expand.

6. Russian in the European tourism industry

The transnational labor and communication flows explain commodification and use of Russian in the post-Soviet space but they cannot explain the emergence of Russian in linguistic landscapes of European cities. Between 2009 and 2012, I have documented the uses of Russian in restaurant menus (e.g., Berlin, Cracow, Dubrovnik, Limassol, Munich, Naples, Prague, Rome, Venice), currency exchange sites (e.g., Dublin, Poznan), museums (e.g., Cologne, Jyväskylä, Oslo, Rome), a variety of clothing (e.g., Helsinki, Prague, Rome), fur (e.g., Bergen), jewelry (e.g., Florence), and other specialty (e.g., fishing supplies, tea, vodka) shops (e.g., Amsterdam, Bergen, Cracow), grocery stores (e.g., Florence, Limassol, Naples, Orange, Vienne), a fishmarket (Bergen), and a variety of hotels (e.g., Frankfurt, Jyväskylä, Strasbourg), train stations (e.g., Helsinki) and airports (e.g., Frankfurt, Helsinki, Nicosia). There is only one thing that all of these sites have in common - they are all contact zones catering to tourists.

Prior to 1991, Soviet tourism was largely an in-country phenomenon. Privileged members of the middle-class traveled to other socialist countries but the Western world remained out of reach for all but a few trustworthy members of the elite. The restricted number of people and the limited amount of money they were allowed to exchange meant that, outside of a few popular resorts, Soviet tourists did not make much of a contribution to local economies. The fall of the Iron Curtain and transition to the market economy created a new middle-class for whom worldliness was a symbol of prestige, and made Russia one of the largest suppliers of tourists to foreign tourist markets. In 2010, EU countries amounted to 33% of the total number of trips made by Russian citizens to non-CIS countries. The key EU destinations between 2000 and 2010 included Finland (17% of all trips), Germany (12%), Italy (11%), and Spain (10%), followed by Greece, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cyprus, and France (Furmanov et al. 2012).

The full impact of Russian tourism cannot be properly estimated through official statistics because business travelers also engage in shopping and, more importantly, because 'Russian tourism' is not limited to the Russian Federation - it also involves tourists from other CIS countries, in particular

Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Yet even this limited data shows that in some countries, such as Finland, Russians have become the largest group of foreign tourists (Jakosuo 2011). The degree of linguistic accommodation tends to correlate with the top destinations: Russian is omnipresent in Finnish tourist brochures, airports, train stations, hotel registration forms, and museums, and frequent in Germany and Italy, where it may appear without parallel texts in German or Italian: for instance, the sign in Picture 2 invites customers to a restaurant that features authentic Ukrainian cuisine. The owners of this business are recent immigrants from Ukraine who exploit their bilingualism to appeal to the larger Russian-speaking clientele.



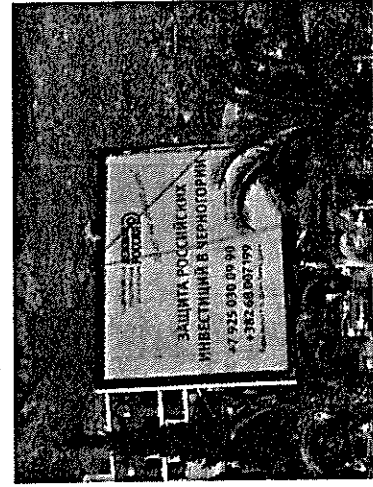
Picture 2: Mister Smak [Ukrainian for taste]: Ukrainian products, home cooking. From our kitchen - to your table... (author's picture, Naples, Italy, August 2010)

An even greater presence of Russian is seen nowadays in Cyprus and Montenegro. In June 2011, the Lamaca airport featured a large sign welcoming new arrivals in Greek, English, and Russian, and several large billboards advertising luxury real estate and banking services in a bilingual format or in Russian only. Russian is particularly frequent in Limassol, where it appears alone or in combinations with Greek or English in restaurant menus, shop signs, and advertisements for restaurants, real estate, and

services (e.g., taxi, boat rentals) (Eracleous & Pavlenko 2012). Even more striking is its presence in Montenegro, where in May of 2012 the road between the coastal towns of Kotor and Budva was peppered by Russian-language billboards advertising real estate, furniture, air travel between Montenegro and Russia and Ukraine, and services of security and construction companies. In Budva itself, one can find Russian-language signage, menus, real estate offices, books, print media, even Café Pushkin.

This visibility of Russian is partially linked to tourism: in Cyprus, Russians are the second largest group after the UK and they spend more money and are twice as likely to stay in 5-star hotels (Eracleous & Pavlenko 2012). Yet the focus on real estate also points to a more permanent presence. Cyprus is, in fact, the top destination for Russian money: in 2007-2009, 28.4% of the total Russian FDI or \$ 40 billion found its way there (Kuznetsov 2010). In 2010, out of 2,500 foreign transactions and business agreements, 1,500 were signed with citizens of the Russian Federation, with additional agreements with citizens of other CIS countries, such as Ukraine (Eracleous & Pavlenko 2012). This leading position is due to the highly developed financial infrastructure and legislation that facilitates tax optimization and offshore business operations, such as round-tripping (i.e. reinvestment into Russian economy) (Filippov 2011).

It is not surprising then that market expansion in the Cypriot tourist and service industry involves the adoption of Russian. In areas highly popular with tourists, such as Limassol, Russian is increasingly visible in the signage and is commonly used by waiters, tour guides and operators, shop owners, even some taxi drivers. This growing niche is filled by Russians settling in Cyprus and also, increasingly, by L2 Russian speakers - migrants from post-Soviet and post-socialist countries (e.g., temporary waiters from Bulgaria), and Cypriots who invest in the study of Russian, either in Russia or in Cyprus (Eracleous & Pavlenko 2012; Protassova 2011).



Picture 3: Defense of Russian investments in Montenegro. [by Russian organization Business Russia. We have been working for 10 years!] (author's picture, Budva, Montenegro, May 2012)

A similar argument could be made about Montenegro where in 2007, Russian tourists accounted only for 9.1% of the total inflow (Koprivica 2008) but Russian investments are extremely high due to liberal regulations on foreign investments and property rights. Between the years of 2001 and 2008, official Russian FDI amounted to 387 million Euros (not counting indirect investments via third countries, such as Cyprus), making Russia the top investor in the local economy, with additional FDIs coming in from Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and the Baltic countries (Fabris et al. 2008). Russians are also purchasing luxury real estate, from holiday resorts, hotels, casinos, and restaurants to villas and apartments, and the number of Russian citizens in the picturesque coastal towns on the Adriatic is growing rapidly. At present, a lot of the signage in Montenegro is authored by L1 Russian-speakers for other L1 Russian-speakers. Yet L2 Russian is also becoming a useful commodity in the tourism industry. As one journalist noted tongue-in-cheek, "there are no Russian language graduates from the School of Humanities in Niksic among Montenegro's unemployed" (Koprivica, 2008).

7. Conclusions

This overview is but a preliminary sketch for the work that needs to be done in contact zones where language learning and use - including but not limited to Russian - are affected by economic factors. Yet even this sketch raises important issues for the language teaching profession. Traditional foreign language curricula feature a limited number of languages and a limited array of skills and competencies, privileging those required by future tourists. Yet the values placed on individual languages in the new economy and the skills required by its participants are ever-changing, affecting the choices made by foreign language learners and their investment in the learning process. An improved understanding of language commodification in the globalized economy could have transformative effects on the language teaching profession, if it were to prepare the students not only for leisure but also for the workplace. Future efforts need to involve the development of a more flexible system that can better prepare students for the multilingual global marketplace by offering a wider array of languages and targeting more specific skills, be it English for academic purposes or Russian for business and tourism industry.

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